

A Prayer for a Deep Clean with a Difference

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back in our Bibles then to Psalm 51. Psalm 51, and you'll find our text in verse 2.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. The text itself is, in that last part, cleanse me from my sin.

And I'm entitling this, A Prayer for a Deep Clean with a Difference. And I'm doing that because it almost seems incredible to those of us who can cast their minds back to 2008.

But in July 2008, the government insisted that there be a Deep Clean program worked out in the hospitals.

There was a lot of serious bugs around, and the government was very concerned that this was becoming something really serious.

[1 : 23] And so the National Health Service embarked on this Deep Clean of everything. And the Deep Clean was the end, turn of phrase, at the time. And they wanted to rid hospitals of these serious bugs.

I don't say they succeeded, but I would like to think, these three years on, that things have improved. But you may remember, too, that political parties had the same situation.

And the various parties embarked on what they, too, called a Deep Clean program. And you may recall back there in 2008 that this was because of the expenses scandal.

You remember, folk were fiddling their expenses, and they were asking for more than they were entitled to, and so on. And so there was this same idea of a Deep Clean in the moral standards of the parties.

And they decided they needed to have rules governing expenses. And, of course, that then spilled over into something deeper and wider.

[2 : 36] There was a Deep Clean in the moral standards of those in public life and being paid handsomely for being public servants.

So the thing rolled on. And you had this whole series of programs dealing with what they called a Deep Clean. And I'm using that simply because David is addressing this problem here in the Psalm. And it's an old word that is ever new. It's the living word of God. And it's as relevant today as ever it was. But it is clearly a Deep Clean with a difference.

It's something far more profound. It's something that God himself is asked for by the Psalm writer. Cleanse me, he says, from my sin.

And in doing this, you see, David directs us all. He wants us to heed his call. He wants us to make his prayer our prayer to the living God.

[3 : 44] That God would cleanse us in the very deepest recesses of our own hearts. And that we would be the better for that. That we would have a deep and real experience of God in our lives.

That we would know the fellowship of God in our lives. And the interesting thing about this is that David is saying this as a godly man.

He was already a man of God. But he was a man of God who had erred greatly. He was a man of God who had shut his eyes, as it were, to the light he had.

And he went off, as you know. And he took the wife, the very beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite. One of his chief men. An excellent soldier, we would say.

And he took his wife. He committed adultery. And then he tried to work Uriah around to be home.

[4 : 53] And the child that would come would be thought to be Uriah. But it didn't work. And poor Uriah ended up dead in a battle. As David instructed his chief commander, Job, to see to it.

A whole catalogue of horrendous sin. And so David the king here talks about his experience. And reminds us of the seriousness of sin in the sight of God.

And how that it bars us fellowship with God. It needs to be dealt with. And so here in the psalm, he's praying that God would restore him.

Cover his sin. Remove the hindrances. And bring him into that renewed fellowship with God. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquities.

And cleanse me from my sin. And you see, the interesting thing too in this is, David knew fine that this wasn't something that he could achieve.

[6 : 01] There was nothing that he could do that merited the deep clean. It was about God working in his grace. You see, have mercy upon me according, verse 1, to your loving kindness.

That is, to your own steadfast covenant love. Deal with me in that way. Deal with me graciously. Sovereignly.

Freely. And so I want us to think about two things. And within these two points, one or two questions as we go. First of all, why pray for a deep clean?

And secondly, how may we pray for this successfully? Let's consider then a few things by way of answering the question, Why pray for a deep clean?

Cleanse me from my sin. Well, the first thing to be said here, we've already said in a way we've anticipated, that is that sin prevents fellowship with God.

[7 : 17] Now, I wonder if you've ever thought about why David, the king, says in verse 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

He wasn't saying my mother had a relationship outside of marriage. He wasn't saying that at all. It's not about that. That's wrong, we know.

But it's not about that. No, he's saying something more profound. He's telling us that we are sinners originally.

We are sinners from the womb. We inherit that state of being sinners in Adam. Those of us who are brought up on the shorter catechism based on the Bible, remember that we sinned in and fell with Adam in his original transgression.

And that's thoroughly biblical. We are sinners in that sense from the womb. In sin, that is, as a sinner, my mother conceived me.

[8 : 34] So my father was a sinner too. That's their original state in Adam. Paul, the apostle in Romans 5 at verse 12, tells us, Sin entered the world by one man, and so death passed upon all men.

And he says this, because all sinned, Romans 5, 12. And that's the interesting thing there, because all sinned. And the only way you can say the connection between the one man who sinned and the all, is that we sinned in and fell with him.

As our covenant head, as our representative. And so sin passed upon all men. And so what's being told to us here, is that in that sinful state, we are barred from, we are prevented from having fellowship with God.

We can't enjoy that naturally. And so, the next thing we may consider, is in answering this, is that we cannot cleanse ourselves.

Again, we've touched on that for a moment in the introduction. Why pray for a deep clean? Because sin prevents fellowship with God. And secondly, we cannot cleanse ourselves.

[10 : 06] In fact, the truth is, we can't, it's not like the government set up a committee. And we'll set the NHS to do a deep clean of all the hospitals and report back.

It's not like, we set up a committee, or we can, and deal with our aberrations in our financial dealings.

Or in our standards in public. It's not like that. We can't set up a committee of others to do the job for us. No. We cannot cleanse ourselves.

No human methods or human products can remove the stain of sin, our guilty state. It can't be done.

God needs to do it. That's why, in Isaiah, remember in Isaiah 1.18, God says to the people, come now. Let us reason together.

[11 : 03] Although your sins be like scarlet, shall become like wool, so that we have red like crimson, shall become like snow.

But it's not because we can do it, or a committee can do it for us, or any human, mere mortal can do it. No, God has to do it. The Bible tells us too, that sin is like leprosy.

It renders us unclean, unfit for the fellowship of God. This is a rather interesting angle. It's not that leprosy, or any skin disease for that matter, is, as it were, is inherent in terms of evil.

It's got evil in it, therefore, you're barred. No, no, it's that God used it. It's that God used it as an image of sin, that it is, it makes us unclean, and unfit for God's presence.

That was the point. It's not that the leper was somehow a worse sinner than anybody else. That's the point altogether. No, God used it as an image of spiritual uncleanness and unfitness.

[12:30] And the point, the basic point is that we need a deep clean. Because sin prevents fellowship with God, and we cannot cleanse ourselves.

Our hearts are hardened against the will of God. Sometimes, if you're well brought up in the Bible, there's a strange, a curious, almost want to do.

But, we have to say how to perform it, I find not. We lack what God alone can give us to enable us. Israel's story was one of rebellion. How many times can you think about they hardened their hearts, but they hardened their hearts, but they would not.

When Jesus came among them all these centuries later than David, wrote these words. What did he say to them? O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have sent to you, how often would I have gathered you together as a mother hen gathers her chickens into her wings, but you were not willing.

[13:55] The heart is hard. The will is enchained to sin. And therefore, you see, there isn't anything in man, or there isn't anything man has invented or will ever invent, that can cleanse him from his sin and fit him for fellowship with God.

And so we see why we need to pray for a deep clean. One last thing we might consider in this, and this should ever be before us, we cannot acquit ourselves in the presence of God at his great judgment.

Unless we are cleansed God's way by God's grace, we are not going to be able to stand in the judgment. The word stand there means to acquit ourselves, to argue our case.

I often think of when sometimes you get these fine lawyers, Queen's counsellors on television, we have a few in Scotland as well, and I listen to them carefully what they have to say.

I often think about folk who excel in that area. They have no chance. not even them, not even the Donald Findleys and the fellow Orr and McBride and so on, and the ladies too.

[15:35] They have no chance of acquitting themselves before God. There will be no better than anyone else, than the poor child who grew up on the side of a tip somewhere in the world.

they will have no better chance, not a bit. In fact, they will have less chance because they know more, and they made improper use of what they know, assuming they are not believers.

as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess to God, and what they will have to confess is, I am guilty, and you are right.

all those who have raged against him. And you see, if you go to Psalm 130 and verse 3, you read the words, Lord, if you should mark iniquities against us, who shall stand?

And the answer expected is no one. It can't be done. And therefore, my dear friends, we need to be crystal clear in our thinking that not all the labor of the most ingenious mind will gain acquittal, a pardon, at the great judgment of God.

[17:11] And so, we have a further reason as to why we need to pray, cleanse me from my sin. Lord, I need this deep clean of yours.

And lastly, under this head, we cannot enter heaven and we cannot escape heaven, unless we truly have this deep clean from God.

God impressed upon the Israelites time and again that meeting with him and having fellowship with him and living with him at last in the world to come was dependent upon being fit to do that.

I remember a book written years ago, No Holiness, No Heaven. It was a succinct title and it was a good title, No Holiness, No Heaven. And it is a reminder to us, you see, we need to be fitted for the heavenly state.

And God impressed that upon his people. The apostles preached that. It wasn't just about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving the work on the cross.

[18:32] It was about living lives that proved that we had turned from our own ways to his ways. Living for him here, living with him forevermore is about holy business.

And in the Old Testament in Israel they were helped to see that by the sacrificial system and the priestly ministry they needed to be fitted to come near even in an outward way.

they had to do things the right way. God would have them outwardly to be a holy people. But of course there was more to it. The point is they had to see that in themselves they were unfit for his fellowship they were impure they were unclean they were unwashed.

They needed this prayer upon their lips from their hearts cleanse me from my sin. And here again you see it wasn't the labor of their hands nor all the ritual religious performances that made them clean.

[19 : 58] No no they had to receive the cleansing the Lord provided. You'll not do better it. If you were to give a quick answer to somebody who could say how can I be right with God how can I enter heaven and escape hell.

There was a question asked by John or it was asked to him and he replied and he had a reply. He looked and he saw a great multitude which no one could remember.

Revelation 7 and verse 14. And the question was asked how did they get there? And John's reply was Lord you know or Master you know these are those who have come out of great tribulation and have washed have cleansed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

They've received Christ and all his benefits and their rest on him. They made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.

So you see here we are thinking about this further reason for asking the Lord for praying for a deep clean from him.

[21 : 16] We want to be in that number in that great multitude who are acceptable in Jesus whose robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb.

And this having secured heaven obviously we escape the world that is prepared for those who live not the Lord Jesus Christ and who have never truly asked to be cleansed from their sin.

The world of darkness of outside and of the torment of regrets of a seared conscience of an aggravated spirit and so on.

Those who are cast out into outer darkness as the Bible calls it where Jesus said the fire is not quenched and the worm dies not.

You have the gnawings of conscience. My dear friends let's be clear in our minds we have good reasons as to why we pray to the Lord Almighty himself cleanse me from my sin.

[22 : 38] But let's look for a few moments as we finish at the second point and it ought to be obvious to us we need to have a clear answer to this to how may we pray this prayer successfully.

Well David tells us verse three for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me verse four against you and you only have I sinned.

In other words in the first place of overarching importance I've sinned against you you almighty and holy God.

See what he does first he acknowledges his sin and sinnership he takes us back to basics and we need to go back to basics again and again don't forget I said about David here's a godly man who had gone wrong and he's back to basics I acknowledge my sin that's where I came in in the first place I came clean and I wanted to be made clean and here I am poor erring saint I've sinned greatly and I acknowledge my sin the way of salvation was formed by grace through faith and he had happily relied upon the Lord and yet in a moment of utter madness and passion he brought himself down and he brought a heap of calamity upon himself and he caused others to mock the Lord whom he served and you see we can never get beyond this if we're to pray this prayer successfully cleanse me from my sin we acknowledge to God our sin it's no different in the gospel age and in this age we're living in than it was in the past we need to see ourselves for what we are in God's sight and we have to acknowledge our sin in his sight we'll never acknowledge a wrongdoing to anyone till we first and truly acknowledge it to God I have sinned against the Lord and when the spirit of God is working in us as he clearly was in David at this point I acknowledge my transgressions when the spirit works in us in this way we call a spade a spade we're ready to identify ourselves as that sinner who acknowledges his sin in the sight of

[25 : 52] God and if ever we have a true look to Jesus a believing look to Jesus it must be as those who acknowledge their sin what else is it about except that we are guilty we are barred from the fellowship of God we're barred from living for him and so on I acknowledge my sin my transgressions my sin is ever before me and he says against you Lord you only I have sin in other words he becomes aware of the awful reality of offending the almighty God who is infinitely pure and holy who hates sin and every false way and

David as a man of God who erred is back to basics here I am again back against you you only I have sinned and done this evil in your sight sometimes we have to say that as God's people who have erred it's evil Lord I'm just going to call it what it is I've done evil here and before we look at who we may have hurt in the process we need to see it face to face with the Almighty I have sinned against the Lord you remember how when God discovered to David the terrible state he was in he sent Nathan the prophet you remember from your Bible knowledge the story about the wee lamb the man who had the wee lamb and the rich man had visitors came and instead of using one of his own many lambs he used his servant's little pet lamb and David was enraged you remember the story there in the book of Samuel and Nathan told him this parable and David became furious and with a cunning turn Nathan said you are the man you're furious about this poor little man and the big man who robbed him of the pet lamb you did worse than this I give you everything that your heart desired and look what you did you took Uriah's wife you are the man I have sinned against the Lord I will say as never before I am the man I am the woman I have sinned I will not blame anyone else although they may have some blame the bottom line is it is my sin

I will confess unto the Lord my sin and that's where we need to get to we must desire to part with our sin and sinful way of life if we are to have an answer to this prayer for a deep clean if we are to pray it successfully so to speak we acknowledge our sin and sinners we become aware of the great offense it is to God and we must desire to part with our sin and sinful ways cleanse me from my sin undertake Lord to do this deep clean of me take away my sin I want to be parted from it I would rather be parted from it forever than to be parted from you Lord for a moment blot out my transgressions remove cleanse away my iniquity and you see that takes us back to the work of Jesus to his cross work to the atonement he's provided that is the only way for at one meant with God sure you've heard it said before atonement the word atonement breaks up nicely into at one meant and that's what this is about at one meant with God fellowship with God restore to me the joy that I had Lord cleanse me says David from my sin and we're back again to basics but oh what vital basics they are we look away to

[31 : 17] Jesus we hear the word said that the blood of Jesus Christ God's son goes on cleansing we apply as those who feel our need to apply to know that that death of Christ and the benefits of it are upon us and it's put so beautifully in the blood that cleanses it deep cleans us the spirit applies the benefits of the death of Christ we're back to basics we want to part with our sin and have it removed and as restored wash away all my iniquity he says a little bit later on verse 7 purge me cleanse me with hyssop and I shall be clean wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow and nowhere is this seen more perfectly than in the work of

Jesus as we've quoted a moment ago his blood goes on cleansing from all and sin oh precious said the songwriter is the flow that makes me white as snow nothing but the blood of Jesus and so for here today as those who in the Christian life have slidden back and our life is a bit of a mess below the radar screen in our hearts then let's admit to God that we are I am the man I am the woman cleanse me effect this deep clean treatment in me Lord let's not wait until we think we're ready to come back to him this is a trick of the enemy you need to get sorted out first you need to deal with that well wait till you're this and that the devil's lie his trick that's not that's not if we come to Christ that wasn't the way we came we came we came helpless we came in our wretchedness in our sin the Lord showed it to us and we came just as we were with all our burden of sin and it's the same for the erring believer we come just as we are we're back to basics but oh what basics they are the heart of the matter the cleansing that God alone provides we're back for and if we've never yet come to him but we know the story let's simply just come to him as we are and desire him wholeheartedly to be parted from our sins in order that we may never be parted from the Lord who loved sinners like us and died for us in our room and in our stead on the cross and we have that lovely word in the song

I find these words the more I reflect on them so fascinating just as I am thou wilt receive welcome pardon heal relieve my dear friends that's the way we're to come I once came across these words some of you may know come you sinners weak and helpless wounded broken by the fall if you tarry till you're better you will never come at all not the righteous not the righteous sinners Jesus came to call cleanse me from my sin may he do that for us wherever we are in our experience that we may give him the glory
Amen if you